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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/808,001	03/14/2001	John Ronald Hughes	8380/PRGA 0103 PUSP	4576
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EXAMINER NGUYEN, TAN D				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/808,001

Applicant(s)

HUGHES ET AL.

Examiner

Tan Dean D. Nguyen

Art Unit

3689

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 June 2009.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 and 76 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 and 76 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 6/26/09 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

Claim Status

2. Claims 1-14 and 76 are pending. They comprise of 2 groups:

- 1) method: claims 1-14, and
- 2) Computer-readable medium (CRM): 76.

Claims 1 and 76 have been amended.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. Claims 1-14 and 76 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

1) In claim 1, step (d), the phrase "electronically locking a document with the draft technical standard" is vague because it says that it's different from the "document with the draft technical standard" of step (b) but in fact it refers to the document

of step (b). Therefore, the term "a document" should be changed to "the document" to be consistent.

2) In claim 76, the preamble calls for "a method of specifying a product", but the body of claim 76 is silent with respect to the "product" and how the step of "specifying" is carried out.

3) In claim 76, step (d) calls for "locking a document wit a draft technical standard". This appears to be different from the previous document of step (b) which is not the case since they appear to be the same document. Changing the term "a" to "the" is recommended.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

6. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of

the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

7. Claims 1-14 (method) and 76 (CRM) are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant Admitted Prior Art (AAPA) in view of GRAINGER and PARKS.

As of 6/26/09, independent method claim 1 is as followed:

1. (Currently amended) A computer system implemented method of developing a technical standard in the process of product development comprising:

- (a) generating a draft technical standard;
- (b) using a computer system, electronically circulating a document with the draft technical standard to a review group;
- (c) automatically attaching review group comments to the draft technical standard;
- (d) electronically locking a document with the draft technical standard to provide a locked document;
- (e) electronically circulating the locked document with the draft technical standard to an approval group, the approval group members having access to the review group comments;

(f) collecting electronic approvals from each member of the approval group and automatically removing any approvals from approval group members if the document with the draft technical standard has been unlocked;

(g) rendering the locked document with the draft technical standard unchangeable once each member of the approval group has electronically approved of the draft technical standard; and

(h) releasing the document with the rendered technical standard for electronic access.

As for independent method¹ claim 1, AAPA, as shown on pages 1-2 of the specification, "Background Art", fairly discloses a method of developing a technical standard in the process of product development comprising:

(a) generating a draft technical standard (specifications);

(b) electronically circulating the draft technical standard (specifications) to a review group.

{see page 1, "Background Art", lines 16-17 "...Typically, the standard is then circulated for review and comments..."}

(c) electronically attaching comments (information) to the draft technical standard (specification) from the reviewing group;

(e) electronically circulating the standard (specifications);

{see page 2, lines 3-7 "...electronic distribution and approval status tracking are all available..."}

(f) collecting electronic approvals from each member of the approval group, and

(h) releasing the rendered technical standard (specifications) for electronic access.

Note that step (b) is well known and conventional as admitted in the Background of the invention on page 1. Similarly, step (e) is also well known and conventional as these approval requests are distributed (or circulated) through various managers of different places for approval.

AAPA teaches the claimed invention except for: 1) carrying out step (c) automatically, 2) step (d), and 3) step (g).

In another similar process for electronic workflow processing using the Internet including automatically managing electronic documents related to application such as reviewing a draft application by generating the draft application, circulating the draft for reviewing and editing, adding comments to the draft, editing the draft, and coordinating, tracking, and approving the draft document, [see 0015, 0016, 0026-0039], **GRAINGER** discloses the use of Internet or web pages for global access for circulation of draft document for review and comment comprising carrying out steps of (a) –(c) automatically and electronically locking the document at the end of the process so they cannot be subsequently altered {see [0027-0032, 0070, especially 0129]}. **GRAINGER** also teaches the step of (c.) attaching the comments, messages, attachments, etc. to the electronic document (web page) [see 0096, 0129, Fig. 26, 252]. It would have been obvious to modify the teachings of AAPA by converting the manual and sporadic electronic workflow processing to automatic workflow pipeline with every step in the

process to be executed from a computer desktop, slashing administrative costs and processing time for completing the project {see GRAINGER [0027]}.

The teachings of AAPA /GRAINGER fails to teach:

2) step (d) of electronically locking the standard (specifications) after step (c.);

and

(g) rendering the technical standard (specification) unchangeable once each member of the approval group has electronically approved.

8. In another similar process for processing electronic documents with respect to development of an information/ideas such as news story information, **PARKS** discloses several document monitoring features such as (d) electronically locking the document with information (news story) for the purpose of restricting access to the document to only authorized user, and (g) rendering the document unchangeable (or “read-only” or “RO”) to inherently preventing modification or editing of the document {see PARKS Fig. 3B (323 “LOCKED”), FORM (341), “RO” (344), col. 9, line 63 to col. 10, lines 1-5, col. 11, lines 29-34. Since it’s well known in the document management or project management that a few number of people approve the draft documentation after it has been reviewed, it would have been obvious to a skilled artisan to modify the teachings of (a)-(c.) of AAPA/GRAINGER by carrying out step (d) as taught by PARKS for the purpose of restricting the access of the review document to a certain critical group of selected people, for example, approval group. Note that the selection of certain group for access is well known parameters in managing electronic document and would have been obvious to a skilled artisan to select the desired circulation group. Also, it would

have been obvious to modify the teachings of AAPA by including step (g) as taught by PARKS to render the electronic document unchangeable once it has been approved or final document has been reviewed for access.

9. As for the new amended limitation in step (f), "and automatically removing any approvals ... has been unlocked", this is inherently included (or appears to be included) in the method of Applicant Admitted Prior Art (AAPA) in view of GRAINGER and PARKS or they are capable of having this limitation.

As for dep. claim 2 (part of 1), which deals with draft generating parameters, i.e. text-based document being captured electronically, this is taught in AAPA page 2, 1st paragraph, see "computer automation, document development, electronic distribution". Moreover, this is also taught in GRAINGER [0048, 0027] or PARKS Figs. 2A or 2B.

As for dep. claim 3 (part of 1), which deals with draft generating parameters, i.e. searching it using other data-structured attributes, this is fairly taught in AAPA, page 1, lines 14-15 wherein "this draft is created by modifying an existing standard" which normally requires or inherently includes some searching using similar data attributes. Moreover, this is non-essential to the scope of the claimed invention which deals with reviewing and approving the draft electronically, and is fairly taught in GRAINGER [0071] or PARKS Figs. 3B, 3C.

As for dep. claim 4 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. tracking status of reviewing and approval, this is fairly taught

in GRAINGER in [0010, 0052, 0067, 69] and in view of AAPA/GRAINGER. The selection of other desired or similar variables for tracking is within the skill of the artisan.

As for dep. claim 5 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. electronically notifying specified user upon approval, this is fairly taught in AAPA page 1, lines 16-17, page 2, lines 3-4, or GRAINGER on [0038, 0096, 0130].

As for dep. claim 6 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. storing the standard in a globally accessible database, this is taught in GRAINGER on Fig. 2, 100, 101, 102, 106 (database).

As for dep. claims 7-9 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. limiting access of the standard based on user authorization and approval, these are fairly taught in GRAINGER on [0061, 0129, 0142].

As for dep. claim 10 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. modifying, incrementing new version, circulating, etc., these are fairly taught in GRAINGER on [0129-0130 "new version"].

As for dep. claim 11 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. translating the standard to proper language for reviewing and communication, is non-essential to the scope of the claimed invention which deals with reviewing and approving the draft electronically and would have been obvious to a skilled artisan as routine works to convert the language of the draft to appropriate language for reviewing and approving by the groups.

As for dep. claim 12 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. attaching additional reviewing and commenting information in the form of documentations or other, this is fairly taught by GRAINGER on Fig. 6, 254, 256, or [0061].

As for dep. claim 13 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. printing the approved document with watermark including the printing date, this is non-essential to the scope of the claimed invention which deals with reviewing and approving the draft electronically, and is fairly taught by AAPA on page 1, lines 15-17. Moreover, it would have been obvious to a skilled artisan to do so if printed document or paper with effective date of approved is desired.

As for dep. claim 14 (part of 1), which deals with well known draft reviewing and approving parameters, i.e. storing the approved document, this is fairly taught by GRAINGER on Fig. 2, 100, or [0042, 0130].

As for independent product¹ claim 76, which is the computer-readable media having computer-readable instructions for performing the method of claim 1 above, it's rejected over the computer-readable media of AAPA in view of GRAINGER for performing the method as cited in claim 1 above. Note that this claims fails to include the limitation of: "comprising a routine set of instructions which when executed by a computer machine cause the computer machine to perform the steps of: "(a) ... (h)", and therefore, it's considered as a plain computer-readable media and the program

contained is merely software components which are non-functional because they are not causing the processor (computer machine) to do anything.

NOTE: Exemplary claim language of an ideal computer system/machine tied to a program is given as follows:

A computer-readable storage medium having stored thereon a computer program for "xxxx", the computer program comprising a routine set of instructions which when executed by a computer machine cause the computer machine to perform the steps of: "xxxx".

10. Claims 1-14, and 76 are rejected (2nd) under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant Admitted Prior Art (AAPA) in view of GRAINGER, PARKS and JEFFERY et al.

As for independent method¹ claim 1, the teachings of AAPA / GRAINGER /PARKS are cited above.

In a similar electronic workflow pipeline or electronic document management system, JEFFERY et al is cited to teach the automatic attachment of comment/attachment to a draft document, "document & attachments", for further communication and "EDIT" function in the heading region to allow editing capabilities to alter information in the document {see col. 13, lines 47-67, col. 14, lines 1-7, Fig. 26}. It would have been obvious to modify the teachings of AAPA /GRAINGER /PARKS by including feature for attaching comment to the document as taught by JEFFERY et al above for further communication or allowing editing capabilities.

As for claims 2-14, and 76, they are rejected for the same reasons set forth above and further in view of JEFFERY et al as cited in claim 1 above.

Response to Arguments

11. Applicant's arguments filed 6/26/09 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive in view of the interpretations of the claim 76 and claim 1 as shown in paragraph no. 7-9 above and further in view of the amendments as shown above.

12. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

1) US Patent 5,315,504 with the title "Electronic document approval system".

Note the term "document" is used.

2) US Patent 5,040,142 with the title "Method of editing and circulating an electronic draft document amongst retrieving persons at remote terminals attached to a local area network". Note again the term "draft document" is used not just "draft technical standard" as in the claimed invention.

No claims are allowed.

13. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct@uspto.gov>. Should you have any questions on access to the private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll free).

1. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://portal.uspto.gov/external/portal/pair>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at **866.217.9197** (toll-free).

2. Any response to this action should be mailed to:

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or faxed to **571-273-8300**.

Hand delivered responses should be brought to the

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3. In receiving an Office Action, it becomes apparent that certain documents are missing, e. g. copies of references, Forms PTO 1449, PTO-892, etc., requests for copies should be directed to Tech Center 3600 Customer Service at (571) 272-3600, or e-mail CustomerService3600@uspto.gov.

4. Any inquiry concerning the merits of the examination of the application should be directed to Dean Tan Nguyen at telephone number (571) 272-6806. My work schedule is normally Monday through Friday from 6:30 am - 4:00 pm. I am scheduled to be off every other Friday. Should I be unavailable during my normal working hours, my supervisor Janice Mooneyham can be reached at (571) 272-6805. The main FAX phone numbers for formal communications concerning this application are (571) 273-8300. My personal Fax is (571) 273-6806. Informal communications may be made, following a telephone call to the examiner, by an informal FAX number to be given.

/Tan Dean D. Nguyen/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3689